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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Mark R. Williams Art Unit : 2177
Serial No. : 09/652,387 Examiner : Debbie M. Le
Filed : August 31, 2000
Title : METHODS AND APPARATUSES FOR MEDIA FILE DELIVERY

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

REPLY

Dear Patent Examiner:

I am writing you as inventor and filer of the above named patent application. I filed this application as a private individual. As I have now exhausted all my funds for patent attorneys to assist with this correspondence, I will try my best to respond on my own. I hope you will bear with me if I make format mistakes in this and future responses.

After again reviewing all the correspondence on this application, I believe there are just two points of misunderstanding that I can readily clear up. Rather than cite those here out of context, please allow me to quickly run through the invention first.

I. This invention was conceived to cover a very specific application for portable music players. Here is a brief overview of the use of the invention.

- The player unit is connected to a PC through typical means – a USB cable, for example – to download compressed music files (such as MP3 files). The invention does not involve encrypting or protecting the music files in any way.
- During installation of the transfer software on a PC, the identifier # of the player unit is transferred to the PC and stored in some non-volatile way (on the hard disk for example).
- During any subsequent music download, this identifier is attached to each downloaded music file to associate it only with that particular player unit. Note that the identifier is **not** related to the *content* of the music file – there are already industry-standard identifiers for MP3 files, for example, and there is no claim to inventing these.

- The invention does nothing to prevent the music download, or to assure a "secure" transfer. However, during the music file transfer it additionally downloads to the player unit a file containing advertising messages, and uploads from the player unit a record of previous listening activity.
- After this download/upload activity, the player unit is disconnected from the network and has no further requirement for connection until the user wishes to download new audio files.
- When the user plays the music from the player unit, the invention does three things:
 1. It checks the identifier that was appended to the music file to determine whether it matches that of the player unit. If not, the music file may have come from another source. For example, the music file could have been downloaded from someone else's PC.
 2. If the music file didn't come from the player unit owner's PC, the player unit plays one of the brief (~3 sec long) advertising messages from the previously downloaded file just prior to playing the song.
 3. If the commercial message is played, the player unit takes note of the advertising message number, associates this with the industry-standard identifier that came with the downloaded music selection itself, and stores both in memory as a record of listening activity.
- Note that the player unit **cannot** prevent the audio file from playing back, regardless of whether an advertising message was played along with it.
- The next time the player unit is attached to the PC for music downloads, the above-mentioned record of previous listening activity is uploaded.
- Once uploaded to the PC, the listening activity information is sooner or later transferred back via network connection to a service that charges the advertiser for the commercial

played, and pays the recording artist or company for the music heard. The user is unaware of and uninvolved in this activity. Moreover, the transfer of this information back to the service happens independently of the music download (probably in the background at a later time).

Unlike what is claimed in other patents, the user is **never** prevented from listening to music (even a pirated copy) and never signs up for any type of billing service or is in any way responsible for paying money for listening to the music.

II. Regarding the Berry patent as a basis for rejecting my claims:

One of the points of misunderstandings I mentioned earlier has to do with “commercial messages.” I am not talking about “commercial” as in “related to commerce” – I’m talking about advertisements – like ads on the radio. I believe that when re-read in this context, my claims are quite dissimilar to those of Berry.

In addition, Berry teaches about manipulating “identifiers”. But as made quite clear even in the Berry abstract, the patent offers:

“A method and system in a multimedia computer system for automatically retrieving and presenting data associated with an audio recording...”

The “identifiers” of my invention are **not** associated with the audio recording content. They serve only to indicate the ownership of the file, and have nothing to do with the file contents.

III. Regarding the Simmons patent as a basis for rejecting my claims:

This is the other point of misunderstanding. My invention never attempts to prevent audio playback, nor does it provide a means of charging the user a fee for the content.

- Simmons sections [0022] and [0040] talk about using an identifier for the purposes of “the requested file being uniquely dynamically encrypted such that it can only be played back on the requesting player/receiver...”. The purpose of the identifier on my invention

is to determine whether an advertising message should be played, **not** to prevent playback of the content. This was not foreseen by Simmons.

- Simmons sections [0045] and [0049] focus on “encryption” of the media file to prevent the content from being played unless all conditions are met. My invention does **not** encrypt content files, since it does not want to prevent them from being played. The word “encryption” does not appear anywhere in my claims, because there is never any attempt made to secure the music.
- Simmons section [0050] focuses on the electronic transaction control mechanism designed to ensure that users pay for content. It uses an electronic serial number as part of this process. My invention does **not** require the user to pay for content. It uses the electronic serial number of the player unit for an entirely different purpose – to determine whether both the audio file and the player unit belong to the same user (the advertising messages are played if the numbers don’t match).

For Simmons to have foreseen my invention, it would have to allow download and unrestricted playback, of any content from any source, at no cost to the user. This is exactly the opposite of what Simmons intends.

In summary:

- Berry teaches how to retrieve additional information related to the audio file content.
- Simmons teaches how to determine whether the file content is allowed to be played back so as to ensure that the consumer pays for content.
- My patent teaches a way to let a content producer and an advertiser know that that advertiser’s message has been played in conjunction with that producer’s content, allowing the advertiser to compensate the content producer as appropriate.

My invention is using basic computer and networking concepts for an entirely different purpose than either Simmons or Berry.

Applicant : Mark R. Williams
Serial No. : 09/652,387
Filed : August 31, 2000
Page : 5 of 10

Summary of Changes to Claims

- Claim 1: Since the word "identifier" alone is getting confused with the definition used in the Berry patent, I have clearly defined this identifier as NOT the one Berry refers to (the industry-standard Redbook audio CD identifier).
- Claims 2 and 4: The changes to claim 1 should make claims 2 and 4 clear without additional changes.
- Claims 5, 6, and 7: The only Berry references to "messages" are to network messaging packets. Moreover, the Berry patent doesn't teach anything about commercial advertisements. I have added the word "advertising" to claims 5 and 6 to make it clear that all "messages" referenced are advertising messages. I've canceled claim 7 because it is now redundant.
- Claims 9 and 10: The real purpose of the invention is to handle audio files. For simplicity I'm canceling the claims for video and text files.
- Claims 11, 13, 14, 15: I've amended or canceled these for the reasons given above for claims 5, 6, and 7.
- Claims 17 and 18: Canceled for the same reasons as given above for claims 9 and 10.

I ask that all claims be allowed in view of the amendments to the claims contained on the following sheets, a total of 5 pages.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: _____

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In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method for uniquely marking a media file, comprising:
receiving a media file; and
appending ~~an~~ a player unit identifier onto the media file that is unrelated to the media file content.
2. (unchanged)
3. (previously canceled)
4. (unchanged)
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an advertising message file.
6. (currently amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the media file and the advertising message file arrive in a concatenated state.
7. (canceled)
8. (unchanged)
9. (canceled)
10. (canceled)

11. (currently amended) A method for delivering an advertising message file, comprising:
 - receiving a media file with a first identifier, wherein the first identifier uniquely identifies a player unit;
 - retrieving a second identifier, wherein the second identifier also uniquely identifies a player unit;
 - comparing the first identifier with the second identifier to determine whether the player unit identified by the first identifier is the same as the player unit identified by the second identifier;
 - retrieving an advertising message file and producing an advertising message output from the advertising message file if the first identifier does not correspond to the second identifier; and
 - producing a media output from the media file.
12. (unchanged)
13. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of retrieving an advertising message file comprises retrieving an advertising message file from a storage device.
14. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of retrieving an advertising message file comprises retrieving an advertising message file from a non-volatile memory.
15. (canceled)
16. (unchanged)
17. (canceled)
18. (canceled)
19. (unchanged)

20. (unchanged)

21. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the media file and the advertising message file are in a concatenated state.

22. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein if the advertising message file cannot be retrieved, then the step of producing a media output is not carried out.

23. (currently amended) A player unit for delivering media files, comprising:

a processor;

a non-volatile memory communicatively coupled to the processor;

a first identifier stored in the non-volatile memory, wherein the first identifier uniquely identifies the player unit;

a communications port communicatively coupled to the processor and capable of communicatively coupling the player unit to a computer system;

a data storage drive communicatively coupled to the processor and capable of transferring data between the player unit and a removable data storage medium;

a first application program residing in the player unit and accessible by the processor, the application program comprising one or more sequences of instructions for uniquely marking a media file, the one or more sequences of instructions causing the processor to perform a number of acts, said acts comprising:

receiving a media file,

retrieving the first identifier from the non-volatile memory,

appending the first identifier onto the media file, and

storing the appended media file in the removable data storage medium;

and

a second application program residing in the player unit and accessible by the processor, the application program comprising one or more sequences of instructions for delivering an advertising message file, the one or more sequences of instructions causing the processor to perform a number of acts, said acts comprising:

receiving a media file with a second identifier, wherein the second

identifier uniquely identifies a player unit,

comparing the second identifier to the first identifier to determine whether the player unit identified by the second identifier is the same as the player unit identified by the first identifier,

retrieving an advertising message file from the non-volatile memory and producing an advertising message output from the advertising message file if the second identifier does not correspond to the first identifier, and producing a media output from the media file.

24. (currently amended) A player unit for delivering files, comprising:

a first logic circuit configured to perform a number of acts, said acts comprising:

receiving a media file,

retrieving a first identifier that uniquely identifies the player unit,

appending a representation of the first identifier onto the media file, and

storing the appended media file in a removable data storage medium;

a second logic circuit configured to perform a number of acts, said acts comprising:

receiving a media file with a second identifier, wherein the second identifier uniquely identifies a player unit

comparing the second identifier to the first identifier to determine whether the player unit identified by the second identifier is the same as the player unit identified by the first identifier,

retrieving an advertising message file from the non-volatile memory and producing an advertising message output from the advertising message file if the second identifier does not correspond to the first identifier, and

producing a media output from the media file;

a non-volatile memory communicatively coupled to the logic circuits for storing the first identifier;

a communications port communicatively coupled to the logic circuits and capable of communicatively coupling the player unit to a computer system; and

Applicant : Mark R. Williams
Serial No. : 09/652,387
Filed : August 31, 2000
Page : 10 of 10

a data storage drive communicatively coupled to the logic circuits and capable of transferring data between the player unit and a removable data storage medium.

25. (unchanged)

26. (unchanged)

27. (unchanged)